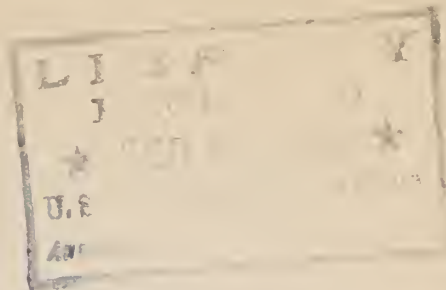


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89
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SAFETY FIRST.

TO FARMERS AND BUSINESS MEN IN
COTTON TERRITORY.

The Department is just issuing a bulletin which I have prepared for the purpose of putting the present situation up to the farmers and business men. It is entitled, "SAFE FARMING IN THE SOUTHERN STATES IN 1919", Ask your county agent for a copy.

The present situation is the most dangerous which the cotton states have faced in recent years. You have had four years of comparative prosperity, partly because of four short crops of cotton with resultant good prices, and partly because you produced so much of your own food and feed. During the last four years there have been short crops in Texas mainly due to drought. In 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914 the Texas crop averaged 4,418,250 bales, while during 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918 it averaged only 3,164,500 bales, or 1,253,750 bales less per annum. Texas has had good rains this winter. From 1911 to 1914, inclusive, Oklahoma averaged 1,036,250 bales per annum. From 1915 to 1918, inclusive, the average was only 742,250 bales or 294,000 bales less per annum, mainly due to drought. Oklahoma has had splendid rains this winter. A big crop in Texas and Oklahoma has always meant a big crop in the whole country. Think that over before you decide to increase your acreage in cotton.

Will the mills of Northern France and Belgium be restored to full working capacity at once? Certainly not! Will the poor people of Europe seek food or cotton first? Food, of course! People can and will wear patched clothing and sleep without pillow-cases and sheets if need be, but the hungry stomach must be fed. Think about that.

The last four years have been a period of gradually increasing prices. Farmers and business men have profited out of this constant increase. Cotton just about kept pace with other things. A pound or an acre of it would buy about the same quantity of other commodities in 1918 at 30 cents a pound as it did in 1914 at 12 cents a pound. But during this time the farmers had the advantage of purchasing supplies in the spring and summer at one level of prices and then selling cotton in the fall at the top price of the year and paying the debts contracted at the lower prices. BE ON YOUR GUARD NOW, for when prices begin to settle down the situation becomes more difficult. We may be in the position of making a crop of cotton with high-priced supplies and settling our debts out of cotton at

a lower price. Especially will this be true if we produce a very large crop and thereby do all in our power to lower the market price of cotton. Has not a large crop always meant lower prices? Think that over.

What about acreage? Let us look at the acreage figures in the bulletin. The total for 1918 was 35,890,000. Oklahoma had more acres planted in 1918 than in either 1911, 1913 or 1914. Texas had more acres in 1918 than in 1911 and only about 700,000 acres less than in 1914. The years 1911, 1913 and 1914 were good years with big crops and generally low prices. With only 150,000 acres more in the whole country in 1911 than we had in the whole country in 1918, we produced 15,693,000 bales, and the farm price December 1, 1911, averaged 8.8 cents per pound. In 1913 we had 37,089,000 acres and produced 14,156,000 bales, and the farm price averaged 12.2 cents per pound December 1, 1913. In 1914 we had 36,632,000 acres, or only 942,000 acres more than in 1918, and yet the production was 16,135,000 bales and the farm price December 1, 1914 was 6.8 cents per pound on the average, due in part, no doubt, to the war in Europe. Think this over.

With less acres than last year and a good season we can easily make a very large crop, especially with good production in Texas and Oklahoma. In 1912 with only 34,283,000 acres we made 13,703,000 bales of cotton. With a good season ahead of us, would you increase the acreage?

Which would you rather do, produce more cotton and take a loss price for it after working a larger number of acres at greater expense, or limit your production to a smaller number of acres, better tended, permitting the full production of your food and feed and a better chance for a good price?

It is absolute folly to upset the present prosperity of the cotton states by planting a large acreage which can only mean a large crop and a lower price. I hear rumors of farmers selling their livestock to put their land all in cotton. Such action is inviting disaster. If farmers, landlords, merchants and bankers combine to pull the house down upon their own heads by producing a large crop of cotton, they should have the courage to make no appeal to the rest of the world for help if their own action leads them into distress.

But remember that there is a good way. Look in the bulletin. FOOD PLUS COTTON EQUALS PROSPERITY. Full production of the FOOD for our people and the MEAT for our growing livestock industry in the South should be the first and most important consideration. SAFE FARMING demands caution this time. Supply your own needs first as a sound measure of protection, then hold your cotton acreage down to a moderate figure, less than in 1918, in order that we may safeguard the production and not destroy our prosperity by deliberately over-producing. IT IS UP TO THE SOUTH TO PLAY A SAFE GAME. SAFETY FIRST DEMANDS THAT EVERY COTTON FARMER, BIG AND LITTLE, SHALL COOPERATE IN HOLDING DOWN THE COTTON ACREAGE.

Yours very truly,

Bradford Knapp.

